And I'm sure I've been lost in this corn maze for fifty hours. I didn't even want to go on this field trip in the first place. Give me an air-conditioned classroom in the city, I said. Let me eat corn fresh from a freezer.

But no, some farmer had to grow a cornfield in the shape of Washington State. He even carved highways through the cornstalks.

And my teacher, Ms. Barlay, had to decide that the maze would be a great field trip. To get a better sense of our state, she said. And for fun, she added.

Here comes a preschool group, each kid gripping a knot on a rope, a teacher at each end. If only our class had a knotted rope, I wouldn't be in this predicament.

"Why is he sitting there?" a preschooler pipes up.
"Maybe he's lost," a teacher ventures. "Can we help you find your way?"

"I'm just resting," I reply. I don't exactly want to be seen following a bunch of three-year-olds out of this maze at the end of a knotted rope.

I look around and spot the sign that tells me I've at least made it halfway.

I would kiss that sign except that two grandmotherly-looking women step into the clearing. They look at me. "Are you lost?" one asks.

I'm starting to wonder if I have "lost" printed on my forehead. Right now, I wouldn't even care. I just want to escape from this maze and never see an ear of corn again.

"Sort of," I admit.
"Lucille and I know the way," the woman says. "Shall we take you?"
"No! No, thanks, I mean." Being led out of the maze by Lucille and her friend would be almost as bad as showing up at the end of a pre-school rope. "I think I can find it if you'll point me in the right direction."

"Take two rights," the woman explains, "then veer southwest."

Now I have to veer southwest, I remember. But how in the world do you veer? What's a "veer" anyway?

Oh, no, there are those preschoolers again!

The preschoolers shuffle by. As the end teacher passes, I slip out and follow, hoping they're heading for the exit.

When we reach the exit, I'll slip away from this group and slyly join my class . . . assuming they haven't already left.

When we reach the end, I wish that they had gone. As the preschoolers and I exit, I realize that the woman aiming a camera at me is Ms. Barlay . . . and that she's taking a picture of me being led out of the maze by a group of three-year-olds.

I bump into Lucille and her friend as I back away.
"Here's the nice lost boy," Lucille says.

My face burns as my classmates look up at the word "lost." But hey, at least I'm out. That's all that matters.

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1. What is the best way to describe how the narrator acts?

- A. excited
- B. hopeful
- C. fearful
- D. stubborn

Six years after his first practice, Jermaine was ready for his big shot. He took a deep breath and remembered what his coach said the first day. "Practice helps you learn the skills, but loving the game makes you a great player."

More than anything, Jermaine loved soccer. He started playing when he was eight years old. While he was not the best technical player on any team, he had more heart for the game than half the professional players in the world. He quickly accelerated his skills through practice every day. Jermaine's parents were proud of him, and his friends cheered him at every game.

Now, Jermaine was the only freshman playing on his high school varsity team. He had not played a single game, but he was so proud of his position. With two minutes left in the final game of the season, Jermaine was in the game. He played fantastically and almost scored the winning goal when he was illegally tripped. Jermaine had a penalty shot.

Jermaine took another deep breath and took his shot. Before he knew what happened, the crowd erupted into cheers, and he was lifted onto the shoulders of two teammates. Jermaine grinned from ear to ear. Now that was a soccer game!

2. What can the reader predict about Jermaine?

- A. He will make his parents angry.
- B. He will continue to play soccer.
- C. He will learn a new sport.
- D. He will lose all of his friends.

3. What conclusion can you draw from the story above?

- A. Jermaine fainted and missed the end of the game.
- B. Jermaine blocked the winning goal for his team.
- C. Jermaine let another player kick the winning goal.
- D. Jermaine scored the winning goal for his team.
The Night Witches
by J. Robbins

During World War II, the Soviet Union created three regiments of female combat pilots to fly dangerous night bombing missions against German forces. The pilots, mechanics, and bomb loaders of the 588th Night Bomber Regiment were all women, and they were nicknamed Nachthexen, or "Night Witches," by German soldiers for their cunning and successful attacks. These Soviet pilots wore ill-fitting clothing and boots passed down from male soldiers, and they conducted their missions in wood and canvas Polikarpov PO-2 biplanes, which were originally intended for crop dusting and had to be adapted to carry bombs. Although these planes were slow and poorly suited for air combat, they were very maneuverable and could fly close to the ground for concealment.

Throughout the war, the Night Witches primarily flew harassment bombing missions. When the sun went down, these pilots would take to the skies and bomb camps, supply depots, and enemy airplanes. One of the favorite tactics of the Soviet pilots was to fly near an enemy encampment, shut down the engines, and glide silently over their bombing site. The canvas and wood surfaces of their airplanes and their ability to fly close to the ground made the Night Witches difficult to detect on radar. The 588th Regiment conducted many bombing raids each night, and by the end of the war, they were credited with dropping 23,000 tons of bombs.

Many of the Soviet women pilots and navigators lost their lives in battle or on official missions. The entire regiment distinguished itself as a model of courage and patriotism. Night Witches earned a total of 23 Gold Star of the Hero of the Soviet Union medals, and the 588th Regiment was the most highly decorated in the Soviet Air Force. After the war, many of the female pilots continued to fly as civilian test pilots. Other members of the 588th Regiment retired to family life or factory work. Today, the Night Witches are still remembered as skilled warriors who fought bravely for their country.

4. Which of the following inferences can be supported by the information in this passage?

A. The Night Witches were not the only Soviet women to fly combat missions.
B. The male Soviet soldiers resented giving their provisions to the Night Witches.
C. The Night Witches earned more awards and honors than any other soldiers.
D. The Polikarpov PO-2 biplanes are known today as the most dangerous planes.

5. Based on the information in the passage, the reader can infer that the Night Witches

A. invented harassment bombing.
B. opened bomb factories after the war.
C. were trained to fly by German pilots.
D. were respected by enemy soldiers.

6. From the description in the second paragraph, the reader can infer that

A. it was necessary for the Night Witches to fly across the Pacific Ocean for missions.
B. the engines of the Polikarpov PO-2 biplanes were unreliable and often failed.
C. the radar used by German forces was more advanced than radar used in Russia.
D. it was important for the Night Witches to avoid detection by enemy soldiers.
7. The reader can infer from the first paragraph that
   - A. the German army had many women pilots.
   - B. most Night Witches were from Germany.
   - C. biplanes operated better at night.
   - D. the 588th Regiment was underfunded.

8. Which of the following inferences is supported by the text?
   - A. The Night Witches were the first Air Force pilots to earn medals.
   - B. The Soviet Union disbanded the 588th Regiment after the war.
   - C. The Night Witches protested against unsafe working conditions.
   - D. The Soviet Union was unaware that the Night Witches were women.

"The next presenter is...Katy Rios," Mr. Tucker announced. Gina watched her best friend move to the front of the room. Katy was presenting on Marie Antoinette. Gina would be next, presenting her research on Elizabeth I. Gina smiled as Katy started her speech.

"One of the most impressive monarchs in England was Queen Elizabeth I," Katy began. Gina almost fell out of her chair. That was exactly how her speech was supposed to start, not Katy's! She sat at her desk with her mouth open, unable to believe what happened.

The class applauded Katy's presentation. Mr. Tucker started to announce Gina's name, but before he could finish, the bell rang. Katy raced out of the door, but Gina sat rooted to her desk. She could not move, could not speak.

Mr. Tucker walked down the aisle to Gina's desk. "Is something wrong, Ms. Lang?"

Gina tried to speak several times. Finally, she mumbled, "That was my speech."

"I'm sorry, I didn't hear you."

Gina took a deep breath. "The speech that Katy gave was mine. She was supposed to present on Marie Antoinette. I spent weeks researching and even had pictures to show the class."

Mr. Tucker asked to see Gina's speech. He looked at the two speeches. Katy's speech was identical to Gina's in every way except her source list. Gina's source list was detailed, full of sources and explanations for the sources. Katy's was a short list of five books with no explanation.

"Thank you, Ms. Lang," Mr. Tucker said. "I will take care of this from here."

Gina nodded and left the room. She did not know what she would say when she saw Katy next.

9. What prediction can the reader make about Katy?
   - A. She will get in trouble for copying Gina's speech.
   - B. She will ask Gina her opinion of Katy's speech.
   - C. She will decide to give a new, original speech.
   - D. She will prove to Mr. Tucker that Gina copied her.

10. What conclusion can the reader draw about Gina?
   - A. She is a not a very good friend.
   - B. She did not write a good speech.
   - C. She does not like teachers.
   - D. She is a very honest person.